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*Public Interest Law Initiative*

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## PILI Offers Public Interest Law Opportunities for Students, Lawyers in Chicago

By **Dan Schwarzlose**

Public Interest Law Initiative

Since 1977, the Public Interest Law Initiative has been a seminal and dynamic force in Chicago's public interest law community. Originally established to increase law students' awareness of public interest law, and the lack of sufficient legal services for the poor, PILI has provided a transformative legal experience to more than 1,500 interns and fellows, who, in turn, have served tens of thousands of underprivileged clients and families. A wide variety of public interest agencies work with PILI to provide an excellent educational experience and expand legal skills on issues ranging from protecting the environment to defending human rights, from immigration law to elder law, from housing issues to family law.

Each year, PILI facilitates three unique educational programs: (1) Summer Internships; (2) School-Year Internships; and (3) Graduate Fellowships.

PILI Summer Internships are available to law students from across the country, and include a \$4,500 stipend for 400 hours of work (ten weeks full-time) during the summer at one of 21 PILI-affiliated agencies. First-year law students must wait until Dec. 1 to apply, but second-year law students are encouraged to apply as early as Oct. 15. While PILI accepts applications until March 31, 2005, students are encouraged to apply as early as possible because many agencies interview and hire before then - particularly over winter break. An application and annotated list of participating agencies for PILI Summer Internships is available on PILI's Web site: [www.pili-law.org](http://www.pili-law.org).

PILI Internships are supplemented with educational luncheon seminars, featuring renowned guest speakers on a broad range of legal issues. In addition to the educational component, these seminars provide meaningful social interaction, as interns are able to meet like-minded law students from across the country, and share experiences about their law schools and summer internships. As a result, interns achieve a sense of community and united purpose that they carry through the summer and beyond.

PILI School-Year Internships are available to Chicago-area law students during the spring semes-

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ter. PILI provides a \$2,250 stipend for 200 hours work at one of seven PILI-affiliated agencies. An application and annotated list of participating agencies is available on PILI's Web site.

PILI Graduate Fellowships are available for incoming associates at participating Chicago law firms. Fellowships are available at 44 PILI-affiliated public interest agencies, and are arranged through an agreement by the firm, the associate, the agency, and PILI. Some firms limit the number of associates who can be fellows; others do not. An incoming associate should begin the process by obtaining approval from his or her firm. Next, a potential Fellow should (1) review the list of agencies on the Web site, (2) contact the agencies that best fit his or her interests to arrange for an interview, and (3) come to an agreement. Once the fellowship is arranged, the fellow informs both the firm and PILI.

PILI fellows generally work five part-time weeks while studying for the bar exam (mornings at the agency, afternoons at the review course), and five full-time weeks after the exam. Most fellows take a break of two weeks immediately before the exam for undivided study. Variations in this schedule can be arranged as long as the agency and the law firm agree (for example, fellows sometimes put in two full-time weeks of work before the summer bar review course begins). A PILI Graduate Fellowship requires 300 hours of work.

For over a quarter-century, PILI has pursued equal access to justice by leveraging legal resources into actual legal services for Chicago's poor and disenfranchised. The symbiotic nature of PILI's internships and fellowships simultaneously provides an invaluable, hands-on educational experience for law students and new lawyers.